

**RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
SCHOOL PERFORMANCE CATEGORIES  
FACE-TO-FACE MEETING AGREEMENT**

**NORTH PROVIDENCE  
APRIL 3, 2002**

**Attending from North Providence:** Paul Vorro, Superintendent of Schools, Wayne Riendeau, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Joseph Goho, Principal North Providence High School, Lorraine Moschella, Principal Dr. Ricci School, Maria Marasco, Special Education Teacher North Providence High School, Kathleen Lisi, Business Education Teacher North Providence High School, John Maguire, President North Providence Teachers Union, and Roderick DaSilva, North Providence School Committee.

**RIDE Staff:** Todd Flaherty, Deputy Commissioner, Elizabeth Hyman, Office of Assessment, Judith Keeley, Office of Instruction, Sally Radford, Office of Special Needs, Elliot Krieger, Media Relations, Paul Williams, Office of Research, High School Reform, and Adult Education.

**RIDE Welcome and Meeting Orientation**

Deputy Commissioner Todd Flaherty welcomed the group and gave an overview of the process and objectives of the meeting including:

- Establishing of agreements on “next steps” as outlined in the School Performance Category Technical Assistance Bulletin with regard to required District/school/RIDE actions;
- Addressing district capacity for implementing activities/next steps (to be outlined in the May 1<sup>st</sup> CRP, Article 31 – Strategic Planning document for submittal to RIDE which also needs to be approved publicly in a North Providence School Committee meeting);
- Addressing RIDE capacity to support, if applicable; and
- Generating a meeting report which needs to be made “public” at the district’s school committee meeting.

## **District/School Response**

Representatives from North Providence were given the opportunity to respond to the performance designation for North Providence High School and Dr. Edward A. Ricci (Middle) School. Superintendent Vorro began the meeting by expressing the districts disappointment with the classification of Ricci as a low performing non-improving school and of North Providence High School as a low performing school which is improving in English/language arts only. He detailed some of the educational changes that have occurred in the district, which include the updating of all curriculums excluding social studies and the unified arts areas. He stated that the new curriculums were standards based and he expected curriculums for social studies and the unified arts areas to be finished by September. At the high school, he said that one of the priorities is the removal of "study" periods from students' schedules especially for 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. For 9<sup>th</sup> grade students a study skills program has replaced these study hall periods. The superintendent also disclosed that the study skills program has been extended down to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Although during the past 3 years the math test scores have improved, he said, the high school had not hit its performance targets. Consequently, all incoming high school freshmen will take pre-algebra. He noted that the district was considering including student state assessment test scores on their transcripts. The superintendent concluded by saying that he believes that the high school is on track to hit its targets and in addition to the previously discussed changes the district conversion to a middle school program would also drive changes at the high school.

Principal Joseph Goho disclosed that the district had made a significant monetary commitment to the school by purchasing new math textbooks. In addition, he stated that the school's graduation expectations are aligned with the state's common core of learning and that the school was one of only two schools in the state that required a senior project.

Deputy Commissioner Flaherty questioned if the district's professional development program helped everybody to improve in their efforts to implement effective standards based instruction. The superintendent answered that, as we were all well aware Article 31 funds ran through the school improvement teams and by the teachers union contract these opportunities must be posted and therefore all professional development opportunities are open to all teachers though out the district. In addition, he disclosed that in the '02/'03 school year the district will have five (full day) professional development days. Further, he noted that the district has run workshops for creating individual education plans and curriculum development and implementation. Wayne Riendeau, Assistant Superintendent of Schools also responded by pointing out that the high school had used its professional development days for curriculum development for its upcoming NEASC visit. He described a summer reading program for elementary teachers in which 70% of the K/5 teachers had participated and further noted that this effort included bringing students in to receive tutoring. Additionally, he stated that the district was planning the same type of professional development effort for math teachers.

Deputy Commissioner Flaherty questioned whether the district staff felt that 43% of the high school's students, who were in the lowest levels of achievement (plus no scores), was representative of these students' overall capabilities. Principal Goho responded by noting that the school had shown improvement in ELA and today the results of state testing showed the school was at or above the state average. In the area of math, he said improvement has been more difficult to show. He predicated that with the opening of the middle school in September and the use of new textbooks at the high school the district would begin to show improvement in math. He also said that the new middle school would require all teachers to have a middle school endorsement. Superintendent Vorro pointed out that School Improvement Teams (SIT) and schools drive change in the district. He said that he believes that the reconstitution of the (new) middle school and facility upgrades will also help to resolve the problem.

Deputy Commissioner Flaherty asked if the high school's plan mirrored the district's plan and urged the high school to review the alignment to the district in terms of instructional initiatives.

Deputy Commissioner Flaherty inquired what had changed in the high school. Kathleen Lisi, a teacher at the high school for ten years, discussed the collaboration of the SIT, dramatic changes in discipline standards, and changes in the students' demographics. Principal Goho added that the level of academic rigor in all grades had been increased and that many teachers had changed instructional methods limiting chalk and talk. Additionally, he voiced concern about the implementation of regulations without funding support.

Principal Lorraine Moschella of the Dr. Ricci School noted that the SIT meets monthly. In addition, she stated that for the past 4 years 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers at the school have participated in professional development activities related to middle school practices. These activities included sending teachers to other schools and bringing in experts to present workshops afterschool. She described how teacher participation in a writing project had shown them the need for change in target grades and eventually the need to expand the project school wide.

Deputy Commissioner Flaherty inquired what had changed in the middle school. Principal Moschella responded that the school had tried to tap parents using grade level parent meetings, which drew approximately one third of the parents to the meetings. In addition, she noted that teachers at the school did not continue the connected math series because of uncertainty of how positions at the (new) middle schools would be filled. However, she indicated they might renew their interest in the fall.

### **Programmatic/Instructional Actions**

Principal Joseph Goho described actions being considered or implemented to improve student performance at the high school. The school has made arrangements with Dr. Felner to present a SALT data review during one of the district's professional days to

the school's faculty. Another professional day is being planned to bring the faculty together to do professional development activities related to the senior project. Study periods has been removed from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade student's schedules and replaced with a study skills course focusing on math and reading. All incoming students will take pre-algebra instead of alternative math courses and the school has incorporated new algebra 1, algebra 2 and geometry textbooks into its math courses. The design of the English curriculum has been changed by grade not course and the graduation expectations had been written into the special education IEPs. The school's guidance department had been revamped resulting in five guidance counselors for one thousand students and the guidance curriculum is standards based.

Principal Lorraine Moschella described actions being considered or implemented to improve student performance at the Dr. Ricci School. This year the school has implemented writing project with Rhode Island College. Since January the school has instituted a school wide writing project. The school also has an advisor/advisee program.

### **RIDE/North Providence Agreements**

- North Providence (district) will continue to reconstitute its middle schools and conversion to a middle school program;
- North Providence (district) will require all middle school teachers to hold a middle school endorsement and engage in appropriate standards based instruction;
- North Providence (district) will implement a new standards based curriculum for all secondary subject areas by September '02;
- North Providence (district) will increase the number of professional development days to 5 (full days) during the '02/'03 school year;
- North Providence High School will provide professional development activities related to the review of SALT data, the senior project and standards based instruction;
- North Providence (district) will sponsor a summer math program for teachers which will include bringing students in to receive tutoring;
- North Providence (district and schools) will further align their school and district plans wherever necessary and review their student achievement objectives;
- North Providence High School will clearly define a "common core" of requirements in their curriculum for all North Providence students.

### **Potential RIDE Support for North Providence**

- North Providence middle school reform efforts will be supported by available opportunities in any RIDE sponsored instructional networks.
- RIDE will assist North Providence High School in their efforts to identify a “common core” of expectations for all students upon request to the RIDE Office of Research, High School Reform, and Adult Education.